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SUBJECT: RUSSIAN REACTION TO OSCE MADRID MINISTERIAL

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The GOR viewed the November 29-30 OSCE Madrid Ministerial as "controversial." On a positive note, the MFA expressed satisfaction with the strengthened role of the security basket, noting that the OSCE had a unique and positive role to play in Afghan border security. On environmental issues, the GOR was pleased with the specific niche the text carves out for the OSCE, and it was hopeful Slovakia's upcoming chairmanship of the Council of Europe would support Russian positions on statelessness in Europe. The MFA characterized the debate on CFE as positive, and that although there were still differences, it appreciated the frank dialogue and wanted to continue negotiations after December 12. The GOR accepted the upcoming lineup for the OSCE Chairmanship, but blamed U.S. interference for Kazakhstan's pullout from the GOR-sponsored ODIHR reform. On a negative note, Russian officials lashed out against U.S. statements and perceived unilateralism regarding the defeat of the OSCE reform measure and the future of ODIHR. The GOR was not prepared to talk about the final outcome of the Kosovo field mission. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In a briefing to the diplomatic corps, MFA Director for European Cooperation Sergei Ryabkov characterized the November 29-30 OSCE Ministerial in Madrid as "controversial" with a mixed impression of plusses and minuses and, as in recent years, "no one left completely happy." In his address to the ministerial, FM Lavrov noted the meeting took place "at a turning point" for Europe, and Ryabkov said that the GOR continued to doubt the ability of the OSCE -- in its current state -- to remain relevant in a changing world.

The Glass Half Full

¶3. (C) The GOR was pleased by the strengthened role of the OSCE's security basket, Ryabkov said, although he noted that the "reinvigorated" Forum for Security and Cooperation and the more intense pace of events still had not reached their full potential. The decision to establish an OSCE presence in Afghanistan was an area Russia and the U.S. both strongly supported, and Ryabkov said that the border monitoring mission was well suited to the OSCE's strengths and would not duplicate efforts already in place. He also noted that the GOR's program for the training of Afghan anti-narcotics forces was a useful contribution. He reiterated FM Lavrov's caution, however, that out of area tasks should be "concrete, targeted" and focused on problems that threatened OSCE member states.

¶4. (C) Ryabkov said the final declaration on the environment was a "good and sound" text that corrected for earlier, more ambitious texts. The declaration spelled out the OSCE's niche on these efforts, he noted, reducing duplication of efforts better performed by other organizations and focusing on the expert capabilities of the OSCE. The GOR also felt that it successfully delivered its message against statelessness and the rights of Russian speaking minorities,

which Ryabkov said the GOR hoped Slovakia would emphasize during its Council of Europe chairmanship.

¶5. (C) Ryabkov characterized the debate on CFE as positive, noting that the GOR was not overdramatizing the situation and would continue negotiations after its suspension of the treaty went into effect on December 12. He cautioned that while the GOR appreciated the United States' frank approach to talks, significant differences in approaches remained. Regarding the timing of Putin's signing the CFE moratorium during the OSCE ministerial itself, he noted that NATO had begun a moratorium of the A/CFE as early as 2001.

Satisfied on Kazakh Chairmanship, But...

¶6. (C) While the GOR viewed the decision for the Chairmanship to be held by Greece in 2009, Kazakhstan in 2010, and Lithuania in 2011 as reasonable, Ryabkov said that it was disappointed by U.S. efforts to undermine the principal of equality among states. He stated that the proof of U.S. influence was in how the U.S. "pushed Kazakhstan to withdraw" from Russia's proposal to reform ODIHR, and warned that Kazakhstan's chairmanship must not be connected to any demands or conditions.

The Glass Half Empty

¶7. (C) Ryabkov criticized the U.S. over continued differences within the OSCE, noting that "unilateralism and attempts to avoid the spirit of compromise-seeking were visible" in Madrid. He characterized Under Secretary Burns' statement as "rhetoric at its worst." In his speech at the

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ministerial, Lavrov said that the OSCE's lack of relevance stemmed from "unilateral, group interests" being placed above the greater good.

¶8. (C) The confrontational tone of the Ministerial went from bad to worse in the discussion of OSCE reform, Ryabkov said. None of the GOR's proposals on a charter, election monitoring, or NGO participation was accepted by the EU and U.S. Ryabkov noted that Russia would continue its efforts to make reform of the human dimension elements a priority in 2008. Ryabkov said that the "crisis" in the OSCE was worsening, and that the preservation of its future was uncertain. While Lavrov had stopped short of saying that Russia may withdraw from the OSCE, he noted in a press conference that the organization needs to be transformed into a "normal, functioning intergovernmental entity," and Ryabkov noted that the OSCE must find areas of general progress and "not stick to standards and slogans."

¶9. (C) Regarding election monitoring, Ryabkov attacked the U.S. for "trying to diminish" the standards of the CIS election monitors (compared to those of ODIHR) as "unproductive." Lavrov noted the organization was at a "point of no return" in agreeing on the rules of election monitoring, or jeopardizing the prospect of ODIHR as part of the OSCE. Lavrov reiterated the GOR's view that ODIHR currently holds itself autonomous from member states and continues to view member states as first- and second- class countries.

¶10. (C) Ryabkov said the GOR believed there had been no possibility to agree on a statement on Kosovo during the Ministerial because of "huge" differences in position. The GOR's insistence that any statement on Kosovo include language on abiding by international law had not been acceptable to "some Western partners" -- whom Lavrov accused in his speech of destabilizing the Balkans and areas of OSCE space, as well as undermining the Helsinki Final Act. Ryabkov said that further discussions would continue in Vienna, the UNSC and within the contact group. At this

point, the GOR was not yet in a position to talk about the final outcome of the Kosovo field mission.

¶11. (C) Comment: Ryabkov's briefing was sharply critical of U.S. positions at the Ministerial, particularly of U.S. efforts to defeat Russia's reform proposals, and showed the growing gulf between Russia and its CIS partners and the rest of the OSCE.

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